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Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance, follow-up and implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action

Written statement* submitted by the Prahar, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[30 August 2015]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Unsolved issues and Identity crisis in Assam

Assam is a beautiful and pluralistic state endowed with an incredible range of culture and landscapes. Located in the northeast of India it has blue hills and green valleys interspersed by mighty Brahmaputra River. But the indigenous people living in this colourful region are suffering a lot and living bland lives. Various Indian laws are based on discrimination in such a form so as to deceive world opinion. Discrimination against indigenous people of Assam is maintained in a very sophisticated form. And now these people have given up their sleep for safeguard of their own identity and rights. The lives of indigenous peoples of Assam are in now turmoils.

Living in harmony and peace since early days of history, the policies of Government of India somehow diversified us into numerous small groups of different caste, community and tribes for its convenience to rule which leads to conflicts amongst these little groups motivated by political issues. The erstwhile Assam was broken into several states on the alibi of administrative efficiency. But these divisions led to acrimony among the newly carved states as the Government of India did not demarcate the borders properly while dividing the states. Consequently people living in border areas live in utter tension and uncertainty about their locus-standee. Border clashes are common in North east.

The potentiality of development of Assam is enriched by its natural resources like petroleum, tea, and Coal and hydro-power generation. The state has the potential to be self sufficient for all-round development as it is rich in natural resources. But policies so far has reflected an avoiding attitude of the government towards North Eastern States of India. The resources were drained out of the state since India's independence for development of other parts of India and Multi-National Industrial Groups only for the vested interest of corrupt political leadership. Some policies in the name of development have brought threat to the existence of indigenous people. Construction of Mega Dams in the region poses threat to the people living in the downstream region and to the environment as a whole.

Migration has always been a reality to Assam. After the annexation of Assam in accordance to Iyandaboo Treaty between British and Burmese, Immigration in Assam began. This is a severe burning issue that affects all Assamese people. There are many problems which develop including overpopulation, rising rates of unemployment, poverty and crime. The British rulers encouraged large scale immigration from other parts of India to Assam. After the independence of India the situation became worse. In 1971, the circumstances became more critical as there occurred with a fresh, continuous and large scale of land-hungry outsiders of the nation and bordering areas to Assam. This large scale illegal migration poses a great threat to the identity of Assamese people and become the cause of internal insecurity to the state. A great deal of the population growth can be seen in the past and present due to immigration of foreign people to this land. As is apparent in any area that receives immigrants the influx of new people has an affect on population size. The large scale migration has significantly changed the demographic scenario in Assam and became the leading cause to social, economic and political instability in Assam.

Assam - a state which has been facing tremendous discrimination and a number of movements aim in to achieve a range of objectives having both ethnic and territorial focus. While some of these were partially resolved, several other remain unresolved. After the independents of India to till now, numbers of acts has been enacted by the Indian Government for Assam to abate aliens viz. Foreigners Acts 1946, The Immigration (Expulsion from Assam) Act, 1950, Illegal Migration (Determination by Tribunal) Act, 1983 etc. Population of Assam increased 1971 to 1991 @52.44% and the dark shadow of Illegal migration seemed to swallow the future of Assamese people. This large demographic conversion engendered the feeling of cultural, linguistic and political insecurity, which snowed under the Assamese, conveyed a strapping touching content to their movement against illegal migrants. As the result the largest and famous movement was evoked in Assam and it was better known as (**Assam Movement**). This most powerful and vigorous mass movement lasted from 1979 to 1985. This movement was undertaken to pressure the Central Government to detect, delete and expel the foreign nationals from Assam. During this "**Assam Agitation**" 855 youths gave up their lives and became "Martyr". Finally, this mass movement was ended with the signing of the Assam accord on 1985. But in lieu of six year's long movement and lives of those 855 Martyrs, Assamese people have lost their valuable rights. According to the Assam Accord the "**Cut of Year**" of expel of Illegal foreigners from Assam is 1971 whether it is 1951 for all other parts of India. That means, Assam has beared the load of Illegal migrants of these extra 20years alone. All anti foreigners acts, laws and Accords are in some extent seems like boomerang for all Assamese people. Till today the Illegal migrant problem remains unresolved. Has the sacrifices of all those brave-hearts who martyred for the cause

gone in vain? The "Cut of Year" for Identification and deportation of Illegal migrants is different with Assam and other parts of India. Why? Illegal migrants constitute more than 30% of the total population of Assam which is a very large number in multi-ethnic Assam. In the meantime, the migrants who are Illegal as per the Assam Accord have remained in Assam and numbers have multiply along with their descendants.

Government lands, Forest Reserves and Sanctuaries and Satras(socio-cultural institution) have been widely encroaching by the Illegal migrants. The high growth of migrated population has affected the Assam economic resources and thus it led to the economic instability of Assamese people. Basic economy of Assam is Agriculture. But here also the immigration has affected a lot on agricultural lands. It causes poverty and unemployment in the Assamese society. The state economic resources are effecting very badly. Such a situation has to face only by Assam in the Country. The functioning of the tribunal for expedition the cases against Illegal migrants is in a shambles due to the indifferent of successive Government. All these have added frustration and anger to Indigenous community of Assam. The people of Assam are now struggling against these illegal foreigners to protect their Identity, Culture and Rights.

Assam is a world famous state for greater one horn Rhinoceros. But the population of this rare threatened species decline day by day. Poaching is become the greatest threat to this vulnerable animal. Most of the illegal migrants are involve in poaching of Rhinos. If government don't take any adequate strict action against these poachers, one horn Rhinoceros will vanish from this world very soon. Proper updating of National Register of Citizen (NRC) based on year 1951, better surveillance, proper sealing of border issues may help to solve this burning issue.

The Majuli Island is a typical example of how indigenous culture is put at stake. This river island in Brahmaputra River has retained Assamese culture in pristine form from the time of Srimanta Sankaradeva (1449-1568) was an integrating force for the indigenous people. He and his followers set up Sattras in this island. As Majuli remains inaccessible to the world, her cultural wealth remains unpolluted. The Sattras existing in this island are custodians of the Assamese culture. But constant erosion has stood as an obstacle to the very existence and survival of the Sattras in Majuli. Already many households as well as several Sattras had to shift out from Majuli. Every such shift makes it susceptible to external influences. Thus there is a crying need to protect the heritage of Majuli by safeguarding the island, which has been in the tentative list for world heritage site for a several years. Unfortunately the Archaeological Survey of India has not pushed the matter in proper manner. An international recognition to this island would have helped a lot by way of boosting up its conservation initiative. Majuli and some other places like Alipukhuri (Patekibori), Bardowa, Barpeta etc. used to be centres of cultural training and propagation since the time of Srimanta Sankaradeva. But over time a lot of cultural wealth vanished due to onslaught of consumerism.

We appeal to the United Nations for interference of this severe matter. And we also request the International community ask the govt of India and request and pressurise them for this Assamese people that we can live a meaningful and respected lives.